#43

LadyLike

Exploring & Expressing Femininity

Her Royal Highness Darlana Stevens

FlashBack with Ms Bob. David DeAlba

Plus...

Brenda Lawrence

Roxanne Van Ness

Lake Erie Gala

We're Doin' It Again...

Night Of A Thousand Gowns

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Letter From The Editor

Well girls, another three months, another issue of LadyLike. It's like clockwork. As you read this one Jo and I are hard at work on the next one. (When we'll feature a little Niki Niki Hoy!) This month we feature the lovely Countess Darlana of the Imperial Court of New York as our Profile girl. Darlana was kind enough to intercede with Empress Philomena and get us into the show at the Marriott in NYC. My photographer, Michele Angello, and I took several rolls of film and several megabytes of digital shots to bring you all the pomp and pageantry. Thanks to my pal Leslie, too. She let us change into our hot outfits in her room.

One of our letters this month talks about the belief held by some in the CD community, that we are all ambassadors for the community and we must do our best to present ladylike, conservative images at all times. Moose poop. Girls just wanna have fun and no matter how good (read passable) you are, there are people who will, upon realizing you aren't female, react in a negative way. That's just life. It doesn't matter if you look like Marilyn Monroe in her prime, these folks won't be impressed. The real reason you should always try to look your best is because of how it makes you feel. No one wants to look like a clown. (Except those fellas and gals at the circus.) When you look your best you act your best and you impress those you meet as someone who is confident, attractive, and well adjusted. So what if you are not a born female? You look like you were born to wear the clothes. That's how you gain people's respect and perhaps understanding.

Having said that, I have to talk about a concept that applies not only to CDs, but to TSs and genetic women as well. The Fashion Victim. My pal, Sarah Thomas, writes a column in Transgender Community News with that title. The Victim is the girl who wears an outfit that might be perfectly in style but on a TG girl it becomes a beacon that flashes, guy in a dress! Guy in a dress! In the genetic girl arena I'm sure you've seen young ladies wearing the popular, backless, "handkerchief" tops. On those with a firm body these tops can be quite impressive. On a girl who is "pleasingly plump" they let us see far more plump than we'd be pleased to. (If you're into plump, please don't write. You know what I mean.)

With crossdressers the prime directive is... try to pass. So what do they do? They say, I must disguise my manly features. They adopt a camouflage mentality. This leads to CDs in long sleeves, turtlenecks and even gloves at times when no woman is wearing that kind of outfit.The idea of camouflage is to blend in with your surroundings. You will find women in long sleeves, turtlenecks and gloves in THE WINTER. Not in the Spring, the Fall or, God forbid, the Summer. Wearing a covered up look like that when no other woman in the whole room is wearing it is worse than showing arm hair or an Adam's Apple. (I have some CD pals who don't shave their arms. They have some hair but it doesn't leap out at you when they are dressed. Look at some women and you will see a good crop of arm hair.)

When I see people wearing high neck, ruffled blouses I automatically think - crossdresser. No one, and I mean no one, wears these tops anymore. Well, maybe in some back woods areas where they still wear clothes from the 1960s, but not in any major city in the country. And, to get even more catty, (Meow!) why would you wear those things to support group meetings? There is no need to try to cover up your Adam's Apple at a support group meeting. Everyone knows you have one. If you're going out with all the girls after the meeting, don't even think that you will pass (remember Robert's Rule of Passing: the probability you will be clocked goes up with the cube of the number of TGs in the group), so you might as well let it hang out and wear something that fits the season and the place you are going. You'll be more comfortable and fit in better with the women who are there. Look around. When you're out somewhere, take a look at what the girls are wearing. Then look at what the women are wearing. Plan your wardrobe accordingly and you will make a better impression. Fantasy is fabulous and we all love sexy styles but keep one foot in reality. Remember, you do not have the body of a 17 year old girl. You have a guy's body - maybe a fifty year old guy's body - and you will not look attractive in a pair of tight, faux snakeskin pants and a matching halter top.

To make the good impression that those who feel we must be ambassadors wish, we must develop good fashion sense. Fashion sense doesn't just happen. You have to work at it. Observe, observe, observe. Learn to see the flaws in other girl's outfits - wrong for their body type, wrong for their age, or just plain wrong. Learn to spot women whose outfits are the perfect compliment to their body type and age. Then, learn to apply it to yourself. Books, magazines and fashion consultants can all be helpful but the most important thing is to open your eyes and your mind. Trendy styles may work fine for you if they fit your body and age. Change your body by losing weight or toning up if that's what it takes to wear the outfit of your dreams. (Don't build any muscles though, girls. That only works on the female bodybuilder circuit.) If you are older, concentrate on timeless styles that you will be able to wear for years of crossdressing fun. However, if you can only have fun in that tight, faux snakeskin outfit and you are fifty two with a hairy back, be prepared for people's reactions. If you can deal with the catty comments of those who don't find your love handles exciting then go ahead and enjoy yourself.

Till next issue, dress well, but dress for fun, not camouflage.

#43

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Cover photo courtesy of Darlana

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The Countess...

Name: Darlana Stevens

Age: early 40's

Profession: Government Contracting Specialist

Residence: Maple Shade, NJ

Height: 5' 8"

Weight: 170

Measurements: 38-33-38

Shoe Size: 10

Favorite Clothes: well made suits, stretchy pants, classic designs, comfortable heels, jewel tone colors

Favorite Things: the company of friends, traveling, arts & crafts, gardening

Least Favorite Things: intolerance, bigotry

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Darlana Stevens

LL: Before we get started I'd like to thank you again for helping us get access to the Night of a 1000 Gowns. The photos are stunning and it really makes the issue. We couldn't have done it without you, in your role as a Countess with the Imperial Court of New York.

LL: What are your earliest memories of the call of glamour?

DS: My first memory of crossdressing was wearing my Aunt's silk panties and half slip. I was 4 years old and visiting my Aunt. After dinner she offered to give my sister and I a bubble bath. We loved those baths, which meant we would be able to smell so pretty, play with the bubbles, and listen to my Aunt tell us about how she became a doctor, and her life as a little girl. During our bath she used to wash and set her hair, and do her nails. She asked if we wanted our nails done and, of course, I said yes. I had the prettiest red nails. She also put some of her curlers in my hair to give me a few little curls.

What I did not expect was that she had washed my underwear and said they were still wet so I could not wear them. But, she did have some things for us to choose from if we cared to. Being somewhat modest and not wanting to walk around without clothes I said yes. She brought in a selection of silk panties and slips for my sister and me. Of course, my sister chose for me and after being powdered, and perfumed I was dressed in the prettiest white, frilly, lace panties and a matching slip that fit me like a dress. I still remember being shown to my mother and grandmother who said how pretty I looked, and then going to bed with clean fresh smelling sheets and the feel of soft silk clothing next to my skin.

LL: Tell us about your first time en femme outside the house.

DS: I went public at an early age. When I was 10 I was forced to put on a dress and had to go trick or treating with my sister. I wasn't happy about that.

LL: I know, I could never bring myself to dress like a girl at Halloween. I was too afraid people would notice how much I liked it.

DS: I wouldn't have done it if it wasn't for my sister. Another thing I didn't want to do but was forced into was to become an Altar Boy. That made me even less happy than my Halloween excursion. I found myself having to wear a long gown with a white top and white bow every week. One good thing was that slowly, piece by piece, wearing that outfit took away any embarrassment or resistance I had to wearing non-boy things.

LL: Most of us find a sexual component to our crossdressing, especially at an early age. When did you discover that aspect?

DS: I was 12 when I found a box of my sister's old clothes in the attic. I remember becoming very excited about the idea of trying some of them on and at some point I had my first orgasm. That scared me because I did not know anything about what had happened to me. After that day, I realized I liked the feeling of that orgasm and went back for more.

LL: You mentioned to me that your youth was spent in an almost perfect place for kiddie crossdressing. Tell us about that.

DS: My parents owned a summer resort hotel so there were plenty of empty rooms to go into to crossdress and play alone. Upstairs in the attic there were all sorts of skirts, dresses, prom dresses and anything else you could think of. I would select what I wanted and then, with all that space in the resort, I would have my pick of rooms to play dress up in.

LL: That sounds like great fun. You're so lucky 'cause many of us have to sneak around at that age in just a small house or apartment.

As you grow and go out into the world changes occur in your dressing patterns. How did school affect your crossdressing?

DS: During my high school and college years I would find myself experimenting with trying on dresses and doing makeup only a few times a year, and usually when I was alone in the house.

LL: So school really put a damper on your dressing activities. When did things pick up again?

DS: Well, after school came marriage so things stayed on hold for a bit. In the early years of marriage, I satisfied myself by buying pretty things for my wife and feminizing my life through her. As the children came along and my career was developing, my priority was to keep my feminine desires in the closet. I had all kinds of fantasies and that's as far as I progressed. My life priorities were always, my health, my family, my job and then me.

LL: A family and career can keep you pretty busy. What was it that finally brought you out of the fantasy world and back into the reality of crossdressing?

DS: The crossdressing fire was rekindled in 1980 when I went to a Halloween party and looked very good. There is a picture of me in the early years, 1985, when I was quite a lot thinner (see page 6). After that party, I would wait until everyone in the house went to sleep, go into the bathroom to change and then into the den to relax as Darlana. When the nest started to empty I realized I could take one of the two master bedrooms and the adjoining bathroom and den as my place. That's when Darlana really started to emerge.

LL: When did you start to meet other crossdressers?

DS: About 7 years ago I came across an ad in the Princeton paper about a group of crossdressers in King of Prussia, Pa. I called the number and got the infor-

continued on next page

▲ An early photo from 1984/5.

mation about Renaissance. I went to my first meeting in October, that "safe month" when even men can dress as girls for Halloween. It was there that I discovered there were other people like me. It was also at that meeting that I met Dina Amberle. It was Dina who called me "she" for the first time. Everyone was so friendly, and the after-meeting watering hole was my first time out as Darlana in public.

LL: The Internet has had a big effect on how CDs learn about themselves and others. In fact, some say that the Net is causing a major change in the need for support groups. How did the Web work for you?

DS: CompuServe and then AOL opened up the world to me. I found myself with an insatiable desire to find out all I could about my feminine side. My opportunity to present myself to the world was provided with online discussions, trading of pictures and eventually safely meeting people from coast to coast that I had chatted with for four years. But, while it was great being online with folks my real desire was to be able to dress up and go out to a public, like a straight restaurant, and be accepted.

LL: The Net introduced you to the world of Dining With Babs.

DS: In 1996 I saw an ad from Babs Casbar. That same week I had come across Babs on AOL. We talked online for about a year and I heard so much about her dinner trips into New York City and she went to all these places in New York. I wanted to take the next step but I was afraid until I met Carol and Babs at their house. We spent a few hours together and they invited me to dinner that weekend. I said yes. I admit, I almost canceled a few times but I'm glad I went.

LL: Where did you go for your first "en femme" dining experience?

DS: We went to the Raven in New Hope, Pa. It was a good place to start since it's a gay-owned restaurant with a mixed crowd and great ambience. It was a wonderful first step. Babs and Carol were so understanding and helpful. They invited me to parties in New York City at The Copa Cabana, to places in New Hope, the Poconos, and to local support groups. I was growing my persona, and gathering a closet full of Darlana clothes.

LL: When did you first learn about the Imperial Court?

DS: Babs invited me to The Night of a Thousand Gowns and I went for a true Cinderella evening. I wore a purple gown and received so many nice comments. Just a few months later I was invited to join the Imperial Court of New York. Since joining the Court I have attended, or have had the opportunity to attend, so many affairs and charity events that my calendar has been full every month.

LL: What about your resemblance to a certain famous person that some of our readers may recognize? Has that made going out tougher or easier?

DS: Well, one interesting occurrence that kept repeating was that in restaurants people would look at me and whisper to each other. I thought they were talking about the man in a dress, and I'm sure there were many who did. But what I learned was that many were saying how much I looked like Eydie Gorme. During my years going out in public I have met Joe Franklyn (NYC talk show host) and John Aston (Gomez on The Addams

At the Copa Cabana in 1998 ▼

Family TV show) and both told me I was the image of Eydie. I decided to learn her songs and start singing as Eydie for charity. My first public appearance was in a Pride Parade on the Imperial Court Float at the corner of 42nd and 5th Avenue singing "April Showers."

LL: What do you consider the best thing about having a developed femme side?

DS: I consider myself blessed to have Darlana as part of me. I love experiencing the smiles that women share with each other as they pass on the street and the nods of approval and recognition they give each other. I like to meet people and I am a touchy kind of person. Darlana can reach out and touch a woman and she will hug back. With men, Darlana can do the same and really get a hug, a kiss... and that Labrador look that men will have [around a woman].

LL: Yes, people do interact with you differently when you are feminine. How did you develop your Darlana look?

DS: I feel as though I am going through an evolutionary process with Darlana. I am very particular in the clothes I select and how I wear my hair. I have tried different hair styles but keep coming back to the Paula Young, "Brittany" style wig. People are nice when they see me in straight hair but usually tell me they like my "Darlana/Brittany" hair better. I still have another year to work on improving my body language, posture and head movement. The difference between boys and girls in body posture is incredible. Girls learn at an early age how to position their chests, stomach, head and back. Boys are just there... no frills.

LL: Awhile ago you told me that you have friends who have only met Darlana, friends who have never met Darlana, and friends who know both sides. How is that working out?

Daisy (l.) and Darlana at Carnegie, Dec. 1998.

DS: My circle of friends who only know Darlana and not my boy side has now expanded beyond the GLBT community and the total acceptance is such a relief. The people I meet treat me almost as a celebrity, and I am sure the Eydie Gorme look does help. I am now very comfortable with my Darlana side and have shared my impersonation of Eydie with people at work. I am very selective as to who I tell, and I must confess I have only told women. It seems to me that a woman can handle this better than another man.

LL: Have any family members been told?

DS: My Mom met Darlana. It was very gratifying. Mom held my hand and said how pretty I was. I said, "I know... I look like you." My sister knows, too. She and I have shared makeup tips, skin care, and she has started to show me how to sew.

LL: Besides dining out and your activities with the Court, what are your favorite things about dressing?

DS: I enjoy looking at all my pretty clothes in my two closets. I remember reading how many transvestites have more clothes than their wives. I never believed I could do that but in the past five years I do indeed have at least four times my wife's wardrobe. I love looking at the different dresses and recalling when and where I wore them. I also love standing in front of the closet and deciding what to wear to go out. To have such a variety and be able to match an article of clothing to the way I feel at the moment is really nice. I rarely wear what I planned and when I pack to go somewhere I take at least 10 outfits to chose from. I do enjoy being able to experience this part of being a girl.

continued on next page

(l. to r.) LLEditor Angela Gardner, TCN Columnist Dina Amberle, and Darlana at Fetish Night, Club Egypt, Phila., 1998.

Countess Darlana (l.) with Billi Ann (r.) of the Imperial Court of New York at the Rhode Island Coronation Ball.

LL: Has Darlana had any memorable experiences?

DS: It's strange how almost every time I go out there is an event that occurs which transforms into a memorable experience. There were the two guys in a Corvette at the Lincoln Tunnel flirting, which I just love, or the homeless man by Carnegie Hall who thanks me for smiling and saying hello to him. His telling me how pretty I am just makes my day. I have a house in the mountains that is a get-away haven for me. I can get away for the weekend, leave Thursday night and come home on Sunday, all the time as Darlana. No boy clothes. I've shared the house with other T-Girls and it's so nice to spend a few days together sharing stories, clothes, makeup, men... and then have boy discussions about cars, tools, girls.

LL: What about Darlana's "dark side?"

DS: I do have a side that loves leather, and light bondage role playing. I am a "switch," which means I like to be dominant as well as subservient. I love the annual Fetish Ball at Club Egypt in Philadelphia and quite often meet my Renaissance sisters there. Attached to this side, which I guess can be called one of my fetishes, is going walking in the old Cemetery behind my mountain house... at midnight. There is an adrenalin rush I get that cannot be explained. I have also been there with a Renaissance sister and we spent a half hour there with the Night Bird screeching over our heads.

LL: OK. Let's get back to daylight stuff. What more "regular" things do you enjoy?

DS: I am indeed a materialistic person, I love my toys which include a 1967 Firebird convertible that I restored, my 14 foot boat that I do fishing in, my 21 foot camping trailer, and my motorcycle. My next adventures will be playing with all my toys as Darlana.

LL: Do you feel that the TG community is getting anywhere in its fight for acceptance?

DS: I am so happy to be part of this changing time of men being able to express their feminine side with a greater freedom than our parents had. I don't expect total acceptance from everyone. I do feel comfortable with my experience that for every one person that may criticize my behavior, there are twenty five who want to know and be with Darlana.

LL: Here's a toughie. Which side is more important for you?

DS: I have a very strong boy and a very strong girl component embodied within me. I do enjoy the male strength that this society has declared I should have, and I do enjoy the female, soft, gentle, non-threatening side that is my interpretation of what society expects of a woman. I do not have a long term desire to abandon one for the other. They co-exist and I am happy.

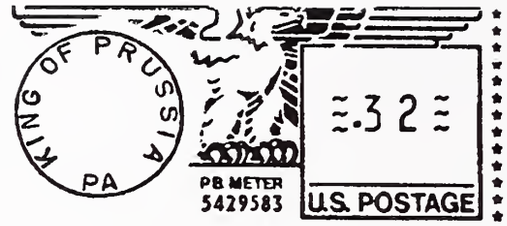
LL: Just a couple of quickies before we wrap up our chat. Favorite places to dine?

DS: Odettes, the Cartwheel, and the Raven in New Hope, Pa., and Ecco d'Italia in the Village (NYC). The staff, the customers and the atmosphere truly make these place so very comfortable for a transgendered person.

LL: Plans for the future?

DS: I have performed as Eydie Gorme (and never been compensated for any of it) at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, the Limelight nightclub in Manhattan, The Web, in White River Junction, Vermont, and for all the Imperial Court affairs. Currently I'm putting together a short show doing the Best of Eydie for nursing homes. The people my parents age just love to meet Darlana and recall their 30's through the Eydie image.

Letters



Some Are Frumpy & Overweight

I just read the readers' letters regarding your editorial about TG Admirers and felt I had to respond - can you print one more? My experience has been personally meeting admiring men who don't x-dress. I have been out on dates with these curious, straight males locally and out-of-town. Perhaps it's been easier for me than a lot of my other "sisters" being that I am short. And the opportunities to get to talk to and find out why these men admire us has arisen more often, now that have I stopped frequenting the local gay bars. I discovered there was nothing there for me, gay men looking for homosexual daddies, butch lesbians looking for lipstick lesbians, bad looking crossdressers hitting on other crossdressers and vicious drag queens.

Now, venturing into the straight clubs as Roxy has given me the occasion to be approached by curious men who strike up a conversation with me and after seeing that I don't bite, will ask me to dance. Granted, they must know I am not a genetic woman, as my walk, wide upper torso and big nose must give me away. But many of these admirers confess to me that even though they know I am not a girl, they are attracted to what they see... the pretty package if you will. I look around the bar and see why. Most real women dress frumpy and are overweight. Funny how they have the basics to doll themselves up and yet they choose not to. I end up dancing the nite away with the admiring fellows.

Roxy

Finally, I had the opportunity to visit a generous, non-x-dressing divorced gentleman from the Midwest. During the day we saw the sights as two buddies, then at nite he wined and dined Roxy in his hometown without hesitation. By all accounts, he is a straight fella, and became curious about the mystique of boys transforming into beautiful girls from all the media hype about crossdressers on television and of course, magazines.

In conclusion, all you beautiful "sisters" out there with an aptitude for socializing, get out of the house and try to visit a safe non-crossdressing environment while acting like a respectable lady. You might be surprised how well you are received!

Livin' la vida loca, Foxy Roxy

Angela says: It sounds like it, doll. (The "vida loca" part. See Roxy's story on page 30.) All I can say is, be careful out there. Despite what you think are negative body issues ("wide upper torso and big nose" Come on, look at these pictures!) you make a lovely package that might make some straight boys with shotguns feel a little weird if they are attracted and then catch on. Having said that, have fun baby! And, up north, gay bars are always better for dancing than straight clubs.

Wants To Connect With Others

Haven't seen or talked to you for a while so wanted to write you for a couple of reasons. Congratulations on issue #41 of **LadyLike** which I purchased just a couple of days ago but have already devoured. Lovely magazine and many lovely ladies!

I would very much like to be in touch with a few of the lovely ladies in your publication. Only problem is, I don't know how to write the girls that have a FWD number. I see no place in your publication that explains the process. Further there are a few beautiful ladies who don't even have a FWD number. How in the world could I get in touch with them? I'm giving you permission to print my mailing address along with some pictures.

Finally, I'd very much like to get in touch with, Michelle Lynn in the red dress on page 17 of issue #41, and Edie from NY on page 43.

In closing let me say I thoroughly enjoyed the article on the Carrousel girls of the '50's. I went to that fabulous place with the fabulous girls a number of times years ago. I greatly look forward to the continuation of this series.

Sincerely, Dianne Kendall P.O. Box 725135, Atlanta, GA 31139

JoAnn says: We move it around a bit but we always have instructions on how to submit photos and how to answer the FWD ads. It's on page 43 in this issue. As for those ladies without an address of FWD number, they choose not to be contacted and we respect that. We never give out anyone's address without permission. But we've printed yours and your photo on page 23. Hopefully, some ladies will decide to write to you.

It's Hell Being Transgendered

Six months ago I went through one of life's stressful events. I was called from the wilderness to be at my wife's side as she was very ill. After a bush plane flight then a commercial airline flight and a four hour drive I was able to be home at 9:00 pm that same night. My wife died in my arms the next morning, something I am not over yet. When you are 72 years old and lose your wife of 27 years, well, there is an emptiness that's hard to fill.

The night that my wife passed away my 44 year-old stepdaughter came to stay so I would have someone with me. Why I did what I did next I will never know, but later that night after all the crying and a few drinks, I looked my lovely stepdaughter in the eye and said, "Shirley, I am transgendered." And I thought, "now you are alone." But, she thought it over a few moments, got up, walked over to me and said, "how wonderful," and gave me a big hug.

Since my wife's passing, I cry a lot. On the plus side, I have my daughter and we do dinners with several of my female friends, and shop, and she has even taken me to get my nails done and other girl things.The fact is, she saved my life. We even exchange clothes for gosh sakes, what a lovely person.

Andrea

I live on a large lake with a population of 24 people but it is a recreation area so there are ots of weekend folks. My daughter and I had friends, Dan & Patty, over for dinner and drinks one night. I decided to tell them about Andrea. A moment of silence and then... questions. Here again they were very kind. They were most interested in how it was possible to live with the stress, and I explained it was not easy. So now Andrea has a friend in Patty who comes to visit.

In closing, all I've got to say is, it's hell being transgendered and 72 years old. But with my daughter's understanding, my horses, and my 10 year old Lab, maybe I can at least live till I die.

You gals at **LadyLike** keep up the good work. And you young gals starting out, [you don't know] how lucky you are to come into a world that will not reject you as they did us old broads fifty years ago. Stay young and lovely.

Andrea Diana Rosaland

Angela replies: I'm very sorry for your loss, Andrea. I imagine you do cry, and will for a bit. It's very hard to lose someone who is that close to you for that long. But, you do have the plus side and you seem to have your daughter and friends to be with you now. As you say, at 72 what the heck. Have fun. Uh oh, I'm getting stuck on a theme here. I may have to tell the next writer to get serious.

We Don't Get Lost

In response to your "gentle reminder" that # 41 is my last issue, please find enclosed a money order for $36 to renew my subscription.

I do indeed enjoy **LadyLike**. You seem to have found a market niche that is all but invisible, and which therefore receives relatively little attention from the crossdressing community, but which probably includes quite a number of men. This niche is that of the solitary crossdressers who attempt to pass in public but who generally do not attend crossdressing meetings or conventions and who go to great lengths to avoid being discovered by their wives or bosses. The niche is obvious to someone like me because I am retired from a top job with one of the country's largest bank holding companies after having spent a lifetime dressing without being discovered by my wife or bosses. I was lucky enough to be able to pass in most of the circumstances in which I placed myself, and over the years discovered that most people are very tolerant of the crossdressers they read; a testament to how far acceptance of crossdressing has progressed over those years. Crossdressing was a major solace on the many lonely nights I spent in strange cities while on the road for my company. But as much as I enjoyed crossdressing, it was not worth risking my marriage or my career. I doubt if I was unusual in that.

LadyLike is an attractive magazine because, as intended, it is ladylike. It does not get lost in the subjects that are of most interest to advanced crossdressers living full time as their femme selves or who are considering (or have undergone) sexual reassignment surgery. Photos, letters, superb editorials and profiles of guys who are very good at dressing constitute an excellent formula. You could also consider articles on how to deal with the police, the value of going only where a lady would go, places where one can get clothes while dressed, how to pass, the importance to the crossdressing community and the future of crossdressing, of behaving oneself and the rest of the lore that has been published before but which is not always easily accessible to solitary crossdressers.

Beyond that, it might be worthwhile to point out every so often that as long as one is behaving like a lady being read can have the positive consequence of helping to build the public's tolerance of crossdressing. Most people are fascinated by crossdressers and are even willing to get acquainted with one. More importantly, the more the general public sees of crossdressers, the more commonplace and unobjectionable crossdressing becomes. (The only real harm that results from being read, as long as one is not in physical danger, is when the observer directly or indirectly spills the beans to the crossdresser's wife or boss.)

Reaching the solitary crossdresser is important to the crossdressing community as it is a source of support for the goal of making crossdressing acceptable in mainstream society. The advanced crossdressers have made a great deal of progress towards that goal (and solitary crossdressers like myself are major beneficiaries of their efforts), but much more needs to be done. The solitary crossdresser can help by dressing, by buying merchandise and by making contributions. Magazines like yours are one of the few ways of reaching and encouraging him.

Sincerely, Christina Susan

Angela says: I don't know about the "niche" stuff. I've been editing this mag for a few issues now and it is my experience that our readership comes from many different niches. We have readers who are support group members, "solitary crossdressers," and those who consider themselves to be more than crossdressers. The one thing they have in common is a desire to be lady like. Thanks for your positive comments but I don't think any of our Profile girls will appreciate being called "guys." In the TG community, it's a good idea to be a bit more politically correct.

Always a Class Mag

I must as always thank you for the many times my photo has blessed the pages of my favorite CD publication. I've been on the road on business for a few weeks now and haven't been home to read the latest issue...can't wait.

I've enclosed a few of my latest photos... trying a slightly different look. I wonder if most of the girls out there are like me and use their photos to find and correct flaws in their look.

As always thank you so much for being here with a class mag, and staying away from the cheap nudity of some of the lesser publications.

Bye, Luv

AlisonCD@aol.com

Refuses To Be Trapped in Own Home

Enclosed is a check for my renewal to **LadyLike**. After subscribing for a year, I can't imagine ' eing without it!

Like all of us, I figure someone may be interested

in a short Bio of me. I'm in my forties, live in northern New Jersey, and have been out to my wife of 18 years for just over 2 years now. I credit my first "Pocono" weekend (and my roommate at the event) for giving me the courage to come all the way out of the closet. My wife and I had a few tense weeks after I gave her "the letter," but since then, I feel we have become closer and stronger with my little 'secret' revealed. My wife now enjoys shopping for Rachel and admits it's nice having a new "girl friend." We go out together on occasion and I have been given the freedom to dress when I want as much as I want (or need). The third floor of our house is in the process of becoming Rachel's dressing room and closet! Thanks to all the sisters out there and to the staff of **LadyLike** and **Paradise in the Poconos**!

I would like to add my two cents worth to some of the recent articles concerning going out in public and "passing." Before I told my wife, I too would get all dolled up and spend a long, long time at the front door trying to get my courage up to venture out. (And, this was late at night!) I look back now at some of the pictures I took of myself as I was going out, and I wonder how or why I would have ever thought I would be able to "pass!" Over-the-top makeup, sky-high spikes and oh-so-short dresses! What was I thinking? And yet, I did go out, walked around in a

continued on page 13

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Letters...

lot of mall parking lots, "looking for my car." With a few more years of experience and several wifely comments like "You're NOT going out in that, your ass is hanging out!" I have learned that if I dress like other women dress, even if it's not really my style, no one will pay much attention to me. Even at 6' 2" in flats, I find that I can go out, in the daytime, and have a nice time shopping with only a few raised eyebrows.

I've spent way too much time at that front door, keys and purse in hand, trying to convince myself that I looked enough like a women to go out among them. It's been with the help of my wife and other sisters that I have finally realized that I will NOT be 'trapped' in my own house for fear of what others may think! If I get 'clocked,' so what, I just smile and walk on with my heels clicking away! For all of you out there waiting at your front door, just do it! Life is short and, as far as we know, we will not pass this way again! And in the meantime, save the flashy, showy stuff for clubs, home use or other CD events.

Hugs to all, Rachel, <Brachel1@aol.com>

Angela replies: Way to go Rachel! Just don't push too much dressing on your wife. Sometimes an "accepting" spouse may be trying to please you to keep the relationship. She may seem like she is okay with it but inside she may not be that happy. Step back from your bliss now and then for a reality check. Your wife may be totally fine with it and I hope that's the case. Just remember to get really in touch with your femininity and spend some time talking about how she feels. And... have fun! (You knew I'd say it.)

More On Experiences With Men

Just got my first copy of LL. I have read the rest, but yours is the best. Go girl! I am writing in response to your request to hear from TG ladies on their experiences with men (issue #42).

Wow! Where do I start? Dating men is a heavy subject. I am a WM TV and have been dating men, women, and other TGs for over a year. Since we are talking about "dating men," I need to explain about pre-dating issues which involve both men and TGs. To put it bluntly, I have found they are both trying to live out a fantasy: However, less than 10% actually [want to] meet . It seems they both feel safe in their fantasy, but psychologically are unable to cope with the reality of an actual meeting/date. It is a double edged sword.

Since I have been dating men, I have come to appreciate what real girls have been complaining about since Adam and Eve. Men are basically no different in their masculinity towards GG women or TGs. As quoted by JoAnn Worth (letters #42), "men are... men." As TGs, that should not surprise us, yet many sisters continue to complain about men simply being men.

The men I have dated all want some kind of physical gratification; it's just that some show it in different ways. I have learned that a man's attention span towards a woman or TG is only as long as his penis, or as high as his testosterone level. Everything leading up to his physical gratification is just social foreplay (sound familiar?).

Some of my dates spent 5-10 hours with me, taking me to dinner, movies, and other public places. They gave me the emotional gratification I needed. A few of them even flirted openly and put their hands a little lower or higher than they should . I loved these kind of dates. These men were perfect gentlemen and I voluntarily showed them my appreciation. I can still remember the warm fuzzy feeling deep inside that lasted for days. But, I must emphasize, these kind of men are the exception, not the rule, and most of them were married! (We are talking about dating, not the moral or ethical issues involved).

My other dates were a little more perverse, ranging mild to wild. Most of these men only wanted to meet at a motel room and live out their fantasy as a "porn star." Not surprisingly most of these men were over-exaggerating their masculinity to hide the "lack of i t." (I think you know what I mean). I found the best way (for me) to handle the problem was to tell the guy to put up or shut up. Many of them apologized and left with their heads down. The ones that didn't, I enjoyed immensely, on my own terms. Sex is not always a prerequisite.

I have never been in a date rape situation. I always communicate extensively prior to a date, so I can get a feel for the person. I go with my feminine instinct. So far, it has worked.

Why do I keep dating? Because it is fun, exciting and it validates my femininity. I know this statement probably infuriates some of the feminist TGs, but we are all TGs for different reasons. Dating men is strictly a personal preference for some of us. If a TG is serious about being a woman, she is going to have to deal with men emotionally and physically on a daily basis, not just in a fantasy/correspondence relationship. My experience has shown me a "good man is hard to find." For you girls out there trying to find Mr. Right, enjoy the journey. Like anything else, it has it's up and downs.

Sincerely, with hugs, Jackie B., PO Box 312
Nuevo, CA 92567

Angela says: Why Jackie, you little tramp... just kidding. But I'm serious about this. When we take on a female role we enjoy all the good, fun stuff like feeling sexy, wearing great outfits and dancing the night away. We also take on the negative aspects of the role, like vulnerability, and being objectified. There are many male/female relationships that I would not care to be on either side of. People can get themselves into a lot of strange interactions. Most of the relationships I would be interested in pursuing aren't the kind that happen in a hotel room for a few sweaty hours. Don't get the wrong idea, if it floats your boat and you feel that you are in control ,then do whatever consenting adults want to do. It's that "in control!" thing that presents the problem. It's hard to know if that's real, or as much an illusion as a good set of breast forms can provide. Aunt Angela says... be careful out there.

Wishes We Published More Often

Thank you so much for your wonderful magazine. I am a long time subscriber and only have missed issue #1. I always enjoy each new issue and wish it came out more often.

My name is Marielle and I have enjoyed wearing

feminine clothing since I was quite young having found my sisters clothes were fun to wear. Whenever I have a chance, I love to dress and be free to be Marielle. Sometime soon I hope to venture out past my closet and attend an organized event.

It is a pleasure to read such a truly classy publication, and know that I have so many sisters out there. I love the 'Mirror, Mirror' section and all the lovely pictures all the girls send in. Thank you for publishing this great magazine and helping us all to understand, and to be understood.

Marielle FWD3239/MarielleCD@aol.com

Ever Thankful To Brenda Lawrence

Angela, I just loved your Editorial in LL#42, Girls Just Wanna. It sounds like me. I used to take my photos to be processed by an adult bookstore, $14 a pop! Now I take them to Walgreen's for just $8. I don't even worry about it.

The first time I went out dressed, I was scared. I went to a gay bar and had a couple of Myer's and Cokes. Scared became excitement after I had a lesbian give me some makeup tips, and she told me

continued on page 15

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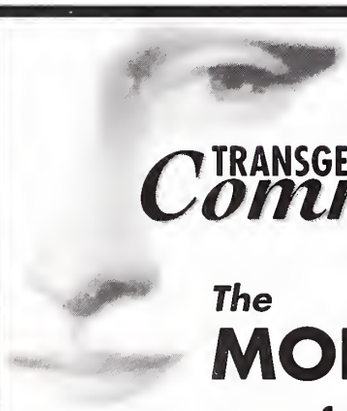

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Letters...

Alison

I looked good. Big turn on for me, not only that she was very good looking but I felt she was sincere.

Now I go out a lot and it doesn't even bother me. Like you said, try to look as good as you can and always be ladylike.

Angela, I love **LadyLike** very much! Your magazine has helped me so much, I can't thank you enough. And Brenda Lawrence, what a sweetheart! I want to give her a million thanks. I had a lot of problems with makeup, but Brenda took time from her busy schedule and helped me when nobody else did. Brenda is why I subscribed to your magazine and I will keep on subscribing for a long time. Now I'm rambling on so I better go. You can print it if you like, I'm writing this from the heart. **LadyLike** is Number 1. Also, I'm thanking you for printing my letter. I didn't think you would. When I got Issue #42 in my mailbox, wow! Well, I'm going to send another photo for Mirror Mirror.

Love always, Alison Van Horn, PMB 350, 15 Paradise Plaza, Sarasota, FL 34239-6905

Ashley

Loves Doing It And Can't Stop

I would like to tell you my life story. When I was about twelve, I started to dress in my sister's and mother's clothes when they were not home, which was about two or three times a week. I did this until I was about nineteen, then I found girls.

I married when I was 26 to the best girl in the whole world. After two years, we had a daughter. My wife passed away at 33 years old. I raised my daughter myself and all this time I did not dress.

Then my daughter married and left home. I started to dress once again. I told my daughter about the dressing, but she will not listen to me. I wanted to show her pictures of me. She will not look at them. I tried dressing when she comes over, but she will not come into the house. So I dress at home when nobody is around. I love doing it and I can't stop. Would you believe I'm 73 years old, I am sending you some recent pictures. Hope you print them. You may print my letter ,too. Your magazine is the greatest . I have enclosed a check for a subscription to the best magazine I have ever read.

Thank you, Ashley

Angela says: I've been around this crossdressing world for awhile myself. Although I'm not yet close to 73, I hope to be a stylish older woman someday, too. In my time, I have heard a few life stories and your's, while sad, isn't unique. Hold on while I put on my pop-psychology wig.

You put your crossdressing on hold for many years to devote yourself to your daughter. Now she has left to make her own life and you have an empty nest. You're filling the void with your dressing and to you it is as exciting as it would be for the thirty something you were when you stopped. You're like a young girl again and you want to share your joy with your daughter. Big mistake. She has a firm image of "dad." She doesn't want to have her reality shaken by seeing you dressed as a woman.

Give her time and above all, don't ambush her. Dad jumping out from behind the door in a mini skirt and wig is not a comforting image. Tell her it's who you are and you need to dress, but also tell her you will respect her wishes and let her know if you plan to dress when she may be thinking about coming over. And, since I'm such a Dr. Joyce Brothers, get yourself to a Renaissance meeting. They're right down the road in King of Prussia and you'll meet lots of other folks, of all ages, who will be more fun than anyone you might meet at an AARP meeting. Get on out there and meet your sisters.

Okay, I'm a little sweaty but it feels good. Shouldn't get worked up like this. Bad for my metabolism. Off the soapbox now and back to our reader's letters.

Issue #42 Was A Hit With Her

I recently received **LadyLike** issue #42 and it definitely lifted my spirits. I loved the Profile on Michelle Moore. She is courageous and beautiful and her perseverance is inspiring. There are times when life seems to be, above all else, an endurance contest. But, then I suppose that characterizes much of the human condition, or rather the human predicament. Thank goodness for **LadyLike** for showing there are others who cherish and explore their femininity. Finding out about their experiences and thoughts can be very enlightening.

Speaking of finding out about others' experiences, I liked the articles by Roxanne Van Ness and Stephanie Reiser for their warmth and good natured humor. The world can always use more of both. the Flashback article, Le Carrousel - Part 2, is amazing because of the ladies (les belles femmes) featured and also because of the hard to find information contained. Capucine is magnifique! I wonder if there had ever been any confusion between her and the French actress (born Germaine Zefebvre in 1933) known by the same name ("nasturtium")?

The subjects of Chez Madame Arthur and Le Carrousel offer possibilities for an interesting documentary, if one were ever made.

Speaking of "les belles femmes," there are just so many beautiful ladies of Mirror-Mirror. I especially noticed Gayle Jones, JoAnn Worth and Sherry Renee. I've enclosed a few more photos, so I hope you won't mind.

Love, Beverly

Awestruck!

I am sill awestruck by the wonderful people I have met by mail through this wonderful publication. I have received many helpful tips and suggestions from a couple of girls I correspond with. The are always positive in their comments, never critical or judgmental. We all do our best with what we have and I have found renewed confidence and drive to continue my quest to be passable.

Thanks again, D. J. Buchan, 10515 Burnett Rd., Charlevoix, MI 49720

Dianne Buchan

continued on page 16

Letters...

Resource Page Changed Her Life

Hello, my name is Vanessa Brooks. I am a 23 year old crossdresser who owes your magazine a great deal. You see, I have known I am transgendered for a couple of years but I did not know where to go to meet others like myself.

Then in October of '99 I came across your magazine. The resource page changed my life. I contacted a few support groups and I met some really great friends, one of which lives in my home town. We now car pool together and go out three or four times a month and have fun. Thank you for putting together a great magazine that helps so many people like me.

XOXO, Vanessa Brooks, PO Box 5374 Chico, CA 95928 <vanessa_tv_brooks@yahoo.com>

Angela responds: XOXO is a great line of trampy clothes! I love them, and hugs to you, you sexy young thing. It's up to you young girls to carry on with the glamour when JoAnn and I retire. I don't think it's gonna be too soon, though.

Vanessa Brooks

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14th Annual Night of A Thousand Gowns

Jeri Jones

Angela Gardner

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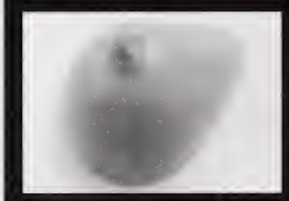

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Night of A Thousand Gowns

Greetings From The Monarchs

Greetings and welcome to the Night of a Thousand Gowns 2000 in The Golden Gotham Sunrise Empire. To all of our friends, families, Imperial subjects and distinguished guests, thank you for joining us as we celebrate a year of hard work and great fun.

We stand before you this evening at the end of one century and the dawn of a new millennium. We will be your hosts for a spectacular evening of glamour and regal pageantry.

We are happy that our year has been a successful one, but are sad to give it up (so we won't! April Fools!)

We welcome our founder Empress I Jose, the Widow Norton. It is with great pride the Imperial Court of New York has continued to find favor in your eyes. Thank you Mama, we wish you good health, long life, love, happiness and prosperity.

A special greeting to our Queen Mother, Nicole the Great de San Diego. We are honored to have you here with us tonight.

It has been a magnificent year for us both. The membership has come together with a diverse group of talented Gay, Leshian, Bisexual, Transgender members. Old members have taken new members under their wings and shown them what the Imperial Court is all about. We have walked down Fifth Avenue for the Easter Parade in our Easter bonnets for the Children's Hope Foundation and Safe Space. We opened the Heritage of Pride Rally and rode down the Avenue through the Village past the Stonewall Bar on our Grecian float for the Heritage of Pride Parade. We presented our first Y.E.S. Scholarship to a High School Senior at the Center's Garden Party. Leather and lace mixed at Folsom East. We met many celebrities- Miss New York, Miss USA and Miss Universe at AMFAR's Boat House Rocks. (They actually wanted our crowns!) From Christmas-in-July to Gents in Jewels, Millennium Madness to Ribbons and Stars, Sea Tea to the 12 Drags of Christmas, we raised not only a few eyebrows but thousands of dollars for charities.

Not only were we busy in New York City; we also traveled throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico making so many wonderful friendships along the way. We Have indeed had a wonderful year.

We now gather for this incredible evening to raise money for Bailey House andThe Leshian and Gay Community Services Center Gender Identity Project. These vital organizations need our support not only tonight but in the years to come. We thank you for supporting them this evening.

We end the evening with the crowning of two special people. Congratulations to Gabriel Della Notte and Victoria Weston. You both are about to embark on one of the most exciting years of your lives. To all in attendance this evening and to all of the people we have met throughout the year, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. You have made the sun rise over Gotham for us many times

Emperor IX Chet
The Ethereal Sunrise Emperor
Empress XIII Anne Tique
The Golden Gotham Glamazon Empress

A Message from The President

On behalf of the membership of the Imperial Court of New York, Inc., I would like to welcome you to the 14th annual Night of aThousand Gowns! Tonight we congratulate their Most Imperial and Sovereign Majesties, Emperor IX Chet and Empress XIII Anne Tique, on a highly visible and successful year. They have reigned with glamour and grace, and we are genuinely enriched as we welcome them to our College of Monarchs this evening.

Tonight we also celebrate the coronation of Their Royal Highnesses, Imperial Crown Prince Royale Gabriel Della Notte, and Imperial Crown Princess Royale Victoria Weston, and wish them all the best.

I would like to extend a special thank you to two very gracious women - Susan Sarandon and Joy Behar - who are our Honorary Chairpeople for this evening. Both of these dynamic and talented women are well-known for their support of various charities, and we thank them for lending us their glamour for this evening.

As well as Ms. Sarandon and Ms. Behar, I thank you, our guests, for helping to support our baneficiaries: Bailey House, and the Gender Identity Project. Today, too many of us have become comfortable in our complacency regarding the AIDS epidemic, and the prejudice and indignity members of the greater GLBT community continue to encounter. We all need to cherish these organizations for continuing to fight the good fight, and I applaud you for your involvement and generosity this evening.

The Imperial Court of New York extends a proud welcome to all our visiting Royalty from Empires across the United States and Canada. Our love and respect go to the founder of the International Court System, Empress I Jose, the Widow Norton, from San Francisco, and our Queen Mother, Empress Nicole the Great de San Diego.

Again, thank you all for joining us in our merrymaking, and I hope you have a wonderful evening filled with lasting memories!

Empress IX Philomena
Empress of Faith, Hope and Cartier

Night of A Thousand Gowns

Thanks to Michele Angello for all the color photos.

The New Empress, Victoria Weston ▼

▲ *This is where it all began. The Empress I José, The Widow Norton (San Diego) Founder International Court System*

We know we cover this event frequently, but you gotta admit, this is one great night for drag!

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How I Made The Ultimate Sacrifice To Become A Girl!

I nearly got myself into the proverbial quandary this time! Our brand-new janitor dropped by to pick up my rent cheque on July 2nd; so, immediately after returning from a 1-hour speed-walk (and washing up, of course), I cartwheeled/backflipped/somersaulted into the bedroom and began plucking my eyebrows! I mean, seriously plucking them! To be honest, for almost 9 1/2 years I'd been wondering how it would look and feel to "take the plunge" and I finally couldn't resist any longer! In retrospect, I wound up doing a pretty decent job. All that remained were two short (possibly 1/2" each), thin strips set wide apart (from iris to iris), reshaped with black pencil for the maximum aesthetic effect. If I do say so myself, the redefined arches would do any girl proud. And therein lay the problem... I wasn't a girl! (Sob!)

What would happen once my so-called "male persona" (i.e., the "authentic" me) was required to leave the building to run an errand? I'd look like a pervert! A bozo! The neighbours' lingering suspicions would be confirmed! (I tried camouflaging the damage with sunglasses, but they didn't cover it up sufficiently!) Worst of all, my aunt was tentatively scheduled to visit the premises later in the month! What could I do? How would I explain? For that matter, which dress would be appropriate for the occasion? (Hey! What was I saying?)

Ironically, it wasn't long before I needed to go out to mail letters/bill payments and withdraw $100 from a bank machine. (Uh-oh.) Faced with the option of emerging as a male sporting humongous shades at night or a female with adorable eyes and an equally-stunning outfit, I chose the latter. ("Marigold" drew the short straw.) A good move, since practically no one was around, but a bad move because a violent thunderstorm soon greeted me - one rude gust blowing the glasses right off my face! ("Et tu, Mother Nature?") Admittedly, I scampered for cover in a decidedly unladylike manner but, hey, this was survival! Alas, despite having had the foresight to carry an umbrella, a windbreaker, and an extra pair of shoes, I got soaked! Still, I did manage to accomplish my mission - amid scores of unnerving lightning bolts and thunderclaps. Moreover, once back inside my cozy apartment, I was relieved to discover I wasn't the physical mess I'd visualized! (Like, Yay!) So much for abbreviated femme excursion # 7...

Naturally, the original dilemma remained far from resolved. For instance, I absolutely had to buy groceries a mere three evenings later, as my reserves were virtually depleted. Again, the agonizing question, should I perpetuate the female disguise, swallow hard, and "go for it"? Or, did I revert to my true (bland) self, counting on nobody to notice said cosmetic "artwork"? Well, if I appeared the classic Spice Girl wannabe on July 5th, this outing presented more of a Blues Brother lookalike (minus the trademark black fedora). Happily, the convenience store clerk seemed not to perceive anything out of the ordinary, and I returned home with food! Food! All right!

For the record, I've been venturing out regularly ever since. To avoid the tiny brows showing - sunglasses notwithstanding - I tweezed them out entirely! That's right. I rendered myself browless. (The word is "browless". What kind of gal do you take me for, anyway?) Hopefully, the little suckers will grow back in a subtle fashion (they've, in fact, been removed several times), sparing me undue embarrassment. In the meantime, I've been enjoying the privilege of creating any style arches I desire! (Giggle.)

Auntie J.J., by the way, failed to visit. She was felled by a serious leg infection in late June, and the condition's never completely healed. (She's 87.)

Will the author (authoress? writer? whatever) eventually show restraint, allowing her eyebrows to sprout anew? Or, will she remain...

Roxanne Van Ness (G.W.E.N.)*

*Girls Without Eyebrows – Now

Roxanne as her "Marigold" personna.

Mirror Mirror

▲ Roxy, 521 Merriman, El Paso TX 79912 (See Rox's story on pg 30)

▲ Roxanne Van Ness as "Monique" FWD2124

▲ Sherri, PO Box 12311, Augusta GA 30914-2311

▲ Janet, Milw. WI

Send Your Photo!

▼ Jackie, NH FWD3392

▲ Ruby Santiago, 12472 Lk. Underhill Rd, Box 101, Orlando FL 32828

▼ Rachel Storm, HI <rwildstorm@hotmail.com>

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▼ Susan, Mich.

A series of articles by Brenda Lawrence.

Perfecting Your Feminine Image

Part 2

I'll be the very first to admit that I'm no expert when it comes to impersonating a woman, but I have figured out what works for me and it seems to project a fairly good feminine image. It's my opinion everyone of us can look like a woman if we can just put together the right combination that works for our body shape and face. In my case, I probably spent several thousand dollars over the years trying all kinds of various clothes, makeup, and wigs — most of which didn't work! About two years ago, it all fell into place, and it even shocked me when I saw the results.

Now, each time I do the transformation, I seem to get better at it. I guess practice does make perfect. I've never felt better or more comfortable about going out in public than I do now (Okay, so I get a little nervous when guys start eyeing the blonde in the short skirt, but HEY!).

They say that clothes make the woman... or is it the crossdresser? Anyway, it's for sure that certain styles and cuts of clothing really make a difference in how good you look. Over the years I've noticed how the same woman can look fantastic in one outfit and just awful the next day in another outfit. I've bought many an article of clothing that I thought I'd look pretty good in, even seemed good in front of a mirror, but after shooting pictures and seeing the results have never worn it again. And, I've slapped together seemingly uncoordinated pieces that nearly took my breath away, because I look so good in them. When I think of the many times I watched and helped my wife pick out clothes and saw how bad she looked in certain things that looked great on the rack, I realized that each of us has a style that makes the woman in us shine. Finding that "look" can be a challenge, but once you've got it - WOW!

Incidently, how many of you out there bought your wives and girlfriends tons of clothing during the early years of courtship or marriage? Store clerks used to watch in awe as I tried to get my wife to buy all kinds of clothing that looked great on her, though she often only took one or two outfits out of the many I selected. I've found this scenario to be common with younger CDs.

Most of us seem to go for the short, tight, sexy look — the ultra fem. This hardly ever works on us with our broad-shouldered, narrow-hipped body. With the wider padded hips I discussed last time, I found things looking more in proportion, though still too tight on top. First to go was the DD cup bras and falsies. As much as we are turned on by the big boobs, most women don't look like that.

Now I barely use any padding at all in my B-cup bra, just enough to give a hint of a bust. That started loosening up my tops. Then, biting the bullet, I bought a size larger in tops and blouses to give a looser look and fit, and that worked really well. Rather than squeeze into a size 12 blouse, a size 14 was roomy and looked better. Long sleeves hide my male muscles.

Skirts were another matter since size 14 fell off me. Experimenting, I found that certain pleated or flared skirts in a 12 gave the fuller hip effect I was looking for. If I wanted a straight skirt, I went with lighter colors than the top. I also got the skirt slightly shorter, and together this gave me the appearance of a wider bottom and narrower chest. My passion is the professional look with the skirt suit. Buying them as separates I found I could wear a size 14 jacket with a size 12 skirt by getting a fitted or princess-seamed jacket and leaving it unbuttoned. Wearing a darker blouse, shell or sweater under the jacket helped even more. Making a "V" at the neckline by unbuttoning the upper buttons on a blouse does even more to narrow the look.

When I'm wearing a blouse/skirt or sweater/skirt combo, I wear a vest to help hide my wide shoulders. Loose or puffy sleeves on a blouse and tightly buttoned cuffs slim your arms also. My wife told me this was the "layered look" and it really does the trick. You get the added bonus of being able to create dozens of different outfits from just a few pieces. Mixing light and dark colors and all the shades of the same color works as well. Sadly, no matter what I try, I still think I look terrible in pink, my favorite color... sigh!

Dresses are a whole new adventure. I've probably torn miles of seams in nearly every dress I tried to get over my shoulders. Then I discovered knits. I get them in a size 16 with button fronts and elastic waists. The buttons help shape over the breasts and the elastic pulls in at the waist. I add a belt and the skirt of the dress flares out to give the illusion of wide hips. The larger size of the dress gives a loose fit around my shoulders rather than tightly stretched, and I appear smaller than I really am. I know it's hard to believe that larger clothes make you look smaller, but that's what happens.

Now, because I have a narrow waist when all cinched in place usually 28-29", I often have to relocate buttons on the suit jackets to get them to hang right. I trial fit them on me and spend a good deal of time positioning the jacket closer together till I have what seems like a nice fit, then mark the new position of the button, and proceed to move it over... generally stabbing myself several times with the needle (how did Gramma do it with those arthritic fingers of hers?)!

Shortening skirts is no fun, but I must have mine several inches above the knees. My wife won't shorten them because she thinks they are too short anyway, which they are...but gee! So, if I find a skirt I like that's too long, I roll it up at the waist until the desired amount of leg shows, and by golly if the skirt doesn't flare out even wider for a more feminine look.

When you've managed to get the "look" that really works for you, you'll be as shocked and pleased with the results as I was. Several of the readers of LadyLike have seen me as a guy and they can't believe the difference - I still can't believe it! Two of them said the same thing: there's no comparison! Naturally, that makes me feel very good. It really helped the day I ran into my next door neighbor in a store while shopping enfemme. We were less than two feet apart (talk about a heart stopper), but there wasn't a hint of recognition on his part. The evening before I had sat in his house giving him a quote for a new engine in his car, and all I could think about later in the store was losing the job.

I mean, would you want a guy who wears dresses putting an engine in your car?

LL

(You can write directly to Brenda Lawrence
care of PO Box 423, Huntley IL 60142)

Mirror Mirror

▲ Jan, Gloucester, UK FWD3723

▲ Stephanie McCall
1785 B Willow Woods Dr
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Separated at Birth?

▲ JoAnne Francis
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Leslie J. O'Hara, Albany NY
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▲ Candy, SW Va. FWD3832

Dianne Kendall, PO Box 125135, Atlanta GA 31139 ▼

Foxy Roxy, 521 Merriman Dr.
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▼ Felicia, S. Fla.

▲ Dee Sinclair, PO Box 7951, Louisville KY 40257-0951

G. SMith, PO Box 260 Fair Haven Sta., New Haven CT 06513 ▼

J. B., PO Box 311992, New Braunfels TX 78131-1992 ▼

▲ Denise, 539 Queen Anne N 1915 Seattle WA 98109

▲ Linda Blair, AR FWD3035

Dawn, Mass. FWD3419 ▼

▼ Barbara, Va. FWD3338

Lillian Farrell FWD3267 ▼

One Night In A Bar

Foxy Roxy

After putting in a tiring work week, I went to "Las Trancas", my new straight bar hang-out, on Friday night. It's a small, dark, romantic place with a keyboard player who provides the music. I sit at the bar, one stool away from an Hispanic man who seems to not pay me any attention. I order a Margarita and when I am about to pay, the barmaid tells me it's paid for by the Hispanic man. Grateful, I get his attention and thank him for it. A woman who is singing with the musician, returns to her seat, which happens to be the stool between the Hispanic man and myself. She grabs his beer and takes a swig, thinking it's hers. Immediately realizing her mistake, she apologizes and the man says not to worry. Apparently, they're drinking the same kind of beer. Her name is Carmen, and I've seen her here before. I guess she is about 50, a bit overweight, and probably divorced, but you could tell she still likes the club scene.

I make conversation with her, then the man asks her to dance. After a few songs, they return and she goes to the ladies room. The musician is playing a slow song when, to my amazement, the Hispanic man (Ray was his name) asks if I want to dance with him! Caught off-guard, I reply, "No." He asks why and I tell him I don't know how. (In truth, I really did want to dance because he was well-dressed and taller than me. But, I couldn't dare risk surprising him on the dance floor if suddenly I began to get excited, if you know what I mean.)

Carmen returns and he takes her out to dance instead. Then a taller, handsome, younger gent walks in, smartly dressed in a black 3-piece suit. He notices me immediately as he makes his way to the end of the bar. It is obvious he knows the bar staff. He comes over to me and asks if I 'm by myself. I realize he's tipsey and that makes me nervous, because men in that state seem to blurt out stupid questions. As I fear, he asks if I'm a guy or a girl. Still unable to come up with a general purpose answer for that type of question, I answer truthfully to avoid a debate. Sure enough, he seems to lose interest in me quickly and returns to his corner at the end of the bar. But, after a bit, he begins calling me "Little Ms. Dangerous!"

Did he have a change of heart? I ignore him, but after a while, he walks by me on his way to the men's restroom in the exterior breezeway and tells me he wants to see me outside. Unsure what his intentions are, I stay put. I ask the barmaid who he is and she informs me he is a regular client who happens to be an attorney. She advises me not to worry, to blow him off, as he frequently shows up drunk. An attractive woman about my age, slim, with long hair and nice shoes walks in and sits at the end of the bar. Mr. Lawyer comes back in and heads to his corner. I feel relief as I think he may begin to direct his attention to her instead.

Sensing a full bladder, I stand up to prepare to go to the ladies room and I notice he goes back out to the breezeway again; trying to head me off at the pass I bet! I decide to beat him at his own game and stay put. He comes back after a while, and I decide it's now safe for me to go, because if he follows me, people have got to notice that for sure. I make my way to the ladies room at the end of the breezeway, find it empty, and go in.

I pull out the makeup and my camera from my purse to find my lipstick at the bottom. I am fixing my lips in the mirror when I hear a knock on the door. Thinking it is a woman checking to see if the restroom is occupied, I answer, "Come in." The door opens, and it's the crazy lawyer! Panicking, I grab my purse and quickly step outside, fearing that if I don't, he may force his way in and lock the door with me inside.

In the breezeway, I notice the damn lights are off, too! As I walk backwards toward the bar, he tries to make small talk, saying "Come here, don't be afraid, I want to talk to you'" Trying not to look scared, I ask him his name and he says, "Rene." I tell him my name is Roxy and shake his hand. I tell him I gotta split because I left my drink at the bar and, if you remember, Carmen the drink-nabber is there!

I manage to get back to the bar safely and immediately relate to the barmaid what happened. She confirms his name and assures me it's not the first time he has followed

a women patron around, but that he's harmless, and besides, she just called a taxi to come pick him up. (What, a lawyer with no car? Apparently he's our answer to the Queen Mary's Irv. Don't tell him I said that!).

Well, she tells me he arrives at the bar by taxi when he knows he's too drunk to drive. Great, a lawyer with a conscience! There's an oxymoron. At any rate, he doesn't come back into the bar and I assume he's left for good. Thinking I'm ready to take off myself, I finish my drink and while fishing for my keys realize my camera is missing. I hurry back to the ladies room only to find it empty and no camera. I go back to the bar and tell the barmaid that I lost my camera and to please keep an eye out for it in case she sees someone with it.

I start to say good-bye to Carmen and everyone at the bar, and taking a stab in the dark, I tell her how I lost my camera. To my amazement, she says, "You know, I found your camera in the lavatory, and I've got it right here." I breath a sigh of relief when she pulls it out of her purse to hand it to me. "You owe me a photograph" she says. "Glad to take one for you - a couple if you want!", I tell her. So, I stand back and snap a picture for her and I bid good-bye to her and Ray (the Hispanic man), who asks me why I'm

leaving. And, just like a man, whispers an invitation to me to his room at the Airport Hilton, which of course, I decline.

On my way to my other favorite straight bar, Adrian's, I realize how lucky I was, and what a good thing is it to make friends with the bar patrons. Carmen may be a drink swiper, but a camera thief she's not!

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FlashBack

Ms Bob & Carol Kleinmaier

An Interview With David DeAlba

Some authors seem to think heterosexual crossdressers and professional female impersonators live on different planets; two distinct species whose paths never cross. But many crossdressers will rearrange their schedules and go way out of their way to see the pros. On business trips they'll excuse themselves from dinner before dessert to catch a show, even if their boss and the company's biggest client are at the table. After all, being in a strange city offers a unique opportunity; they won't be recognized by anyone in the audience. And for most of the 20th century Finocchio's was on the itinerary for any of us who visited San Francisco. What better place to see polished performers than at America's oldest showroom featuring female impersonators "at the same location since 1936?" For this reason, if no other, when the herstories & histories of the gender community are written, Finocchio's will receive a meaty chapter. But on November 27, 1999, Finocchio's hung up her tits. The club closed that night.

To mark this auspicious event *LadyLike* presents an interview with David de Alba, who performed at Finocchio's for about fifteen years from the early 1970's to the mid-'80's. Of all the performers we have interviewed for *FlashBack*, David is the most active. He still performs regularly. Two of his best impersonations are Liza Minnelli and Judy Garland. He is quite an authority on Judy and collects Garland memorabilia. He also created his own female character, Boy-chic, which allows him more artistic latitude than his "straight" impersonations. "As Boy-chic I was able to sing as David, not Judy. I could do the songs of Nancy Wilson or Shirley Bassey or even do Judy's songs. I would not have to pretend."

He's also an international star. He performed many times on Spanish language television. Recently he wrote that, "I was awakened by my dogs at 2 AM and I turned the TV on, which was on the Univisión, the Spanish station. And guess what? My Fuera De Serie Show was on again; being seen internationally." This show was shot in 1998 and, as David says, "who knows how many late night repeats go on and on?"

David is very up to the minute, a cyberspace female impersonator. He has an award winning web site, "David de Alba's Theatrical Arts Page," www.ctaz.com/~pryner/, which contains a wealth of information on David and performers he's worked with. You can hear his lovely voice by clicking on "David Sings" at his site. Last year he was inducted into Transgender Forum's "Gallery of Greats." www.3dcom.com/tgfs/gallery/gallery.html. Not content with cyberspace, he also appears in other media. Recently he taped several new television shows: one for a Las Vegas station and two for stations in Miami. These two programs were also shown on the international channels Univisión and Telemundo.

David seems to have an eternally optimistic attitude. When we asked what he was doing this week, he replied, "Right now I am not performing; let's say this week, but there is always a chance tomorrow!"

MsB: Where were you born?

DdA: I was born in Camagüey, Cuba, which is in the center of the island, about midway between Havana and Guantánamo Bay. I came to the US in

David deAlba as Boy-Chic ▼

1962, when I was a young boy. I was very nervous. It was quite a traumatic thing for a child to leave his country and come here alone, not even knowing the language. I lived in Florida for awhile. For one year I was in a special boarding school in Bradenton, Florida, near Sarasota. I started my first year of High School in West Palm Beach, then for one year I went to Lewisburg, West Virginia to a military school, believe it or not. I used to say to people "The only thing butch I picked up from the military school was the discipline." I finished high school in Chicago at Senn High School. I then went to Wright Junior College, also in Chicago. I understand actress Kim Novak went there. I still didn't know what to do with my life. A trade school gave me an aptitude test and I won a partial scholarship to the American School of Beauty Culture, a well-known cosmetology school and I eventually became a licensed cosmetologist.

Ms B: Did you work as cosmetologist?

DdA: Yes, I worked in Chicago. Then when I came to San Francisco I opened a salon in Potrero Hill (a neighborhood in San Francisco). The shop was called "Heri the Hairstylist" (Stylist of the Stars). That's my real name, Heri, the other was created for the stage.

Ms B: Let's go back to Chicago. Did you do any performing there?

DdA: Yes, between my last years in High School and Junior College, around 1965 to 1969. I met a well-known hairdresser, his name escapes me, and he initiated me into drag. He said to me, "I would like to make you up one day at my apartment." He created for me my first female make-up and then remarked, "You look a lot like Judy Garland."

MsB: How did you feel being in drag for the first time?

DdA: It felt odd, but exciting. It was like a nice shock. I did not look like a lot of men, who look like they are really in drag and do not look real, as an impersonator should.

MsB: Would you have crossdressed if he hadn't suggested it?

DdA: I probably would have learned eventually from some source or another or by going backstage and learning from the pros, as I did anyway throughout my career. Remember, being a hairdresser myself, I knew a lot of make-up techniques already. All I would have to learn would be to apply them skillfully to myself.

MsB: Did you start impersonating Judy Garland based on your friend's suggestion?

DdA: At the Halloween Balls at the famous Aragon Ballroom in Chicago, I always sang as Judy. I appeared there several times and also at the Southside Halloween Balls, in a predominately African-American neighborhood. Since I had taken classes for dancing and singing as a boy in school, I never wanted to do pantomime. But that's what everybody was doing, with the exception of maybe the emcee or one or two older acts who were comedians. I was called then "The Male Judy Garland."

MsB: Did you only perform at balls?

DdA: There was the very famous Chesterfield Club at Clark and Diversey Streets. It had an excellent drag show six nights a week. On Sunday they allowed new-comers to perform. So every Sunday I did a guest spot in their regular show. I did Judy and I performed as a male jazz dancer, like to the theme from the movie "The Man with the Golden Arm" or Latin American sambas and mambos.

MsB: When you did Judy, did you mime to a recording or sing live?

DdA: I'll tell you what happened. At the Chesterfield Club and

continued next page

at the Aragon Ballroom they had no band so here's what I had to do: They would put on her recording and I would sing over her voice with a live mike. It became like a duet. Then in the Southside Balls, they had a four-piece combo, so I did get to sing live, without any vocal track or recording behind. That was a lot of fun.

Ms B: Did Judy Garland ever find out?

DdA: I told her that I impersonated her. It was one of the most thrilling moments of my life meeting the real Judy Garland. I was just a teen in Chicago. She said to me in a childlike way, like Dorothy, "Do you like me that much?" and kissed me on the cheek. Then she said she would love to catch my act, but she was leaving Chicago to continue her tour.

MsB: Did you perform at any other clubs?

DdA: I performed at all sorts of different clubs. One straight club on Sheridan Road on the opposite side of town was called The Boom Boom Room, later on re-named The Latin Quarters. It had a small band. Near by was The Tropicana Motel. A pianist accompanied me in their lounge. The Annex, near the Chesterfield Club, had a combo. There were six or seven little clubs here and there and, because their owners knew who I was, they would say, "Will you come tomorrow to do a show?" I also worked in a club called the Nightlife on Rush Street. I'm told it's gone now.

I performed in the famed Old Town area in Chicago at a place called El Latino Club, which actually was an American club. I don't know why they called it El Latino. There was nothing Latin American about it at all. During the week I performed as a male dancer with a go-go girl downstairs in the speakeasy. On Friday and Saturday nights I did my Judy Garland act in the upstairs theater. There was a jazz club on the way to El Latino Club with some African-American musicians who also played at the Southside Halloween Balls, so on my way I would stop and they would ask me to sing a couple of songs. They were always charming to me.

I also did regular straight gigs at places like Mundelein College, a Catholic school for women. Three girls from my high school & I, a little dancing trio I formed, did Cool from "West Side Story." At Wright Junior College at Christmas time I danced as an elf with the school orchestra to Sleighride. I did a show for some talent scouts at the Chicago McCormick Boys' Club, where I won a trophy, which I still have, for "Most Promising Young Dancer," sponsored by Coca-Cola.

Ms B: Were you putting yourself through school as a dancer?

DdA: No, not really. After graduating from beauty school I worked full time as a beautician in the daytime. I just worked a few hours at night entertaining for the fun and for extra money to travel. I went to San Francisco several times on short trips with the money I made.

***MsB: Before we started taping you said you were on the cover of the tabloid* The National Insider.**

DdA: On Halloween after I performed at the Aragon Ballroom, I took a taxi to the Southside to perform at the other ball. *The National Insider* was photographing people at the Southside. They photographed me as Judy singing live on stage and, without talking to me, they wrote a very nice critique of my act. So one day, all of a sudden, I'm walking down the street and I see a photo of me on the front cover of *The National Insider* and a long article about me inside with a second photo.

Somehow, they found out that I was working at El Latino Club in Old Town. One Saturday night they came backstage as I was getting ready to do my female impersonation act. They told me they wanted to do an interview right there on the spot. They took photos of me putting on my make-up, then with the wig on, and later performing on stage. So in 1969 I appeared twice in *The National Insider*.

At that time I was going under a different stage name. I would use Heri del Valle (Pronounced: Airy del Vayay. In Spanish the letter "h" is silent and "ll" sounds more like a "y"). Later on, I changed it because Carroll Wallace and other people at Finocchio's couldn't pronounce it. They'd say "Eric" for Heri or the last name like Rudy Valle. So I changed it to David de Alba.

MsB: What to you remember most about the balls?

DdA: To me as a teenager, one of the greatest moments I had was Halloween at the Aragon Ballroom, which is a very elegant place where Lawrence Welk and Benny Goodman played in the old days. In the middle of the show all these people from the audience, mostly in drag, were

parading their costumes. Then the regular performers from the Chesterfield Club came on and they presented me in their, "guest artist spot" to close the entertainment part of the show. I did Judy's song What Now My Love? dressed in an exact replica of the paisley suit she was to wear in the movie, "Valley of the Dolls." My Grandma María made it for me. When I finished everyone stood up screaming. I wish I had a movie of that moment; it was so outrageous. You know I was maybe 19, 20, so it was quite a thrill.

Ms B: Since you were such a popular entertainer in Chicago, why did you move to San Francisco?

DdA: In Chicago there were a lot of vice raids at some of the clubs. There was always this tension, so I thought, "I don't want to live in this kind of corrupt society, police-wise." In Chicago there was Mayor Daley and if people didn't pay... So I considered moving to San Francisco finally. My first hairdressing job in San Francisco was for a fashionable wig shop called Ultra Violet's on Polk Street. (Note: The Polk Gulch neighborhood was the center of the San Francisco gay community in the early 1970's.) It was owned by Danny and Violet Chu. Jackie Phillips, who performed at Finnocchio's, came in to buy a red human hair wig from me. So before I was working at Finocchio's, I would go there at night to pick up or deliver the styled wigs for Lucian, Bobby De Castro, Elton Paris, Rene DeCarlo and a few others.

Ms B: When did you start performing there?

DdA: Around 1971. First as a steady act. Then, much later, as a regular substitute for Lavern, Carroll Wallace, or if an act was off for some reason, which, as Mrs. Finocchio pointed out to me, was an honor and really unheard of. Once you were out at Finocchio's, you rarely were asked to come back. I lasted there until 1985. But before I ever performed at Finocchio's, I performed at many clubs in San Francisco like The Frolic Room, The Fantasy, and as a special guest on Charles Pierce's Talent Contest at the Guilded Cage. I won doing my Garland act. He gave me a personally autographed copy of his LP, "For Pierced Ears."

MsB: What was the cast at Finocchio's like?

DdA: When I started there I was a young man. Almost everyone was older than I. Lucian was the oldest, of course, like a grandfather figure. He was very charming, a sweet man. He performed as Sophie Tucker. He wore very proudly some of Sophie Tucker's original gowns. He bought them from her or she gave them to him, or whatever. He sang and did some comedy patter. Lucian had a beautiful soprano voice. When I was in the audience on my night off, he would announce, pointing at me, "My wig was styled by David." It was nice of him to do that!

MsB: The other performers? What was Elton Paris like?

DdA: He was very stern, a Marlene Dietrich kind of sternness. You couldn't like, go up and embrace him with a Garland-style hug. He would be very polite. If I talked too fast he would say, "OK, slow down." He would say, "Remember when you do my wig, I don't want you to use any hair spray, wave set or do any teasing on it. Just set it in a tight page-boy with bangs"... very stern, so I would do his wig exactly the way he wanted.

He started his career as a singer. He was not, he even admits, a beautiful drag, even when he was young. He did more of a funny drag act at the club. He would come out on stage dressed in a Salvation Army-type costume and wearing old tennis shoes. And he would sing songs *like Little Green Apples* and Sinatra's *That's Life*. He would start singing in a very high voice and then drop to a low baritone. In the middle of his act his boobies would start dropping and dropping and dropping. He would just push them back

continued next page

up with his hand as the audience roared with laughter.

Then, of course, there were the dancers, the Eve-ettes. Bobby De Castro was a dancer, who could sing a few lyrics. He was actually a very good dancer. Mario Moré, a ballet dancer from Mexico was new and very talented. He would dance on the tips of his toes like a ballerina. He was marvelous! René DeCarlo was, of course, another fantastic dancer. Coquís, another newly hired Eve-ette, was an excellent modern jazz dancer. In my opinion, Reggie Dahl was one of the best dancers there.

MsB: Tell me more about Reggie Dahl.

DdA: Reggie and I were never close friends, but we visited each other and got along fine. He was a very moody person. The Finocchio Club could do a lot of mental damage to some performers. He would be very sweet and the moment that boy went to work, he became like a different person. Sometimes he could become a monster. I knew this about him and learned to be careful not to upset him. For example, at make-up time everything was very quiet, but if anyone made a loud noise or the heater was turned on upstairs Reggie would say, "Who the hell is making noises?" He would just snap in a second and get so furious. But afterwards, when he went downstairs, it was, "Hi, dear, how are you?"

He wasn't a singer, but he did the song *Call Me* by Petula Clark very well. He had a gorgeous face and a very pretty body as a boy and in drag, too. He was so moody, but at least he had a lot of talent behind that mood. He was one of the few dancers who would do stretches and warm-ups before going on stage. I miss him really!

MsB: How did you audition for Finocchio's?

DdA: I was asked to perform a guest spot in their regular show once and I sang a very nice Latin American tune and did a Broadway medley. I guess Mrs. (Eve) Finocchio liked me enough to hire me soon after. Once I went to Mrs. Finocchio and said, "Are you in a good mood tonight?" And she said, "Oh, yes I am." I said, "Can I do an impersonation of you?" She looked at me with a little girl look in her eyes and said: "Yes, of course." I said: "Do you know the first thing you say when someone is applying to be in your show?" She looked at me puzzled. I said to her smiling: "May I see your legs?" She replied, "Really, do I say that?" One thing you could never joke with her about was her Eve-ettes. When they came on stage she was transfixed.

Many of us would say, "The Eve-ettes ruined the show." Before the Eve-ettes came about there were very good acts, like Walter Hart, Lucian and The Two Old Bags from Oakland (Ray Francis and John Lonas) for example just to name a few. But Mrs. Finocchio, like most club owners, found it was cheaper to have a chorus of dancers, some of whom could double as an act. Two for the price of one. Performers like Lavern, Elton, or myself, were never chorus dancers. They had to pay us as featured solo acts. Some of the Eve-ettes were very talented, but most were not. They could only do mediocre song and dance routine.

When Lavern joined the show he was young, fresh out of the famous Jewel Box Revue, a professional. Some of the Eve-ettes were not really show people. They came with the attitude, "I don't care. This is just a job." A lot of people feel that they eventually ruined a show that was known all over the world for solo class acts. Many times as the Eve-ettes would go off stage and after their performance applause would be weak. Then Russell Reed or Lori Shannon, who was very nasty, but was a very good act, would go on and the applause would come back up.

MsB: So Lori Shannon was not such a sweetheart.

DdA: Maybe to his friends, but he was very arrogant. Especially after he was on *All In The Family* twice. And he also was a theatrical critic. He wrote as Donald McLean for the Bay Area Reporter, a free, gay San Francisco weekly newspaper, which is still published. That gave him the power, like, "If you do anything against me, I will ruin your career with a bad review."

MsB: What about* All In The Family*?

DdA: Lavern, Florencio de los Santos, myself and some other drag performers went to audition for *All In The Family* at the Saint Francis Hotel. When Lori got the part, it went to

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his head, like he was the star of that show. One night, I said to him backstage , "Lori, you were marvelous in *All In The Family*." He says, "Yes, I know." He was that type of person. I still remember when he died, Reggie Dahl said to me, "That queen died of her own hate."

Finocchio's was known among performers as the "house of hate" or "elephant burial ground." At first I did not know why they said that. Most of the people in the show then were older acts, vaudevillians. People said, "Once you're at Finocchio's, you're on your way out, in the twilight of you career." But I said, "Oh, no, I am too young to think that way! There's more to life beyond Finocchio's." So in between gigs there, I did my Boy-Chic act all over the San Francisco Bay Area along with my old forte, Garland and my new Liza Minnelli act. At that time I actually had my own band, because Bill Bullard (Finocchio's musical director and pianist) and Shep Shepherd, (Finocchio's drummer) couldn't travel because they were playing at the club every night. So, I found a drummer, saxophone player and bass player. I had Bill record the piano parts on tape for me. When I did a concert, I would have my musicians play with Bill's pre-recorded piano part. It was hard to find a piano in most of those nightclubs.

You'd think that after so many wonderful stories we'd have exhausted David's store of memories. But this interview is far from over. In the next issue we'll continue in the current vein, mixing the on-stage glamour with the backstage dish. David's candor is refreshing, that you must join Flash Back next issue for more tales of Finocchio's, warts and all.

Ms BOB is a collector of gender related books, magazines and ephemera. Currently she is seeking several issues of Female Mimics #6 (Aug, 1965), #1 (Winter, 1970-1971), National Cotillion 1973, Vol. 5, #2 (1974), Vol. 5, #3 (Fall, 1974), Vol. 6, #3 (Fall, 1975) and Female Mimics Special (Winter, 1977-78). For used and hard to find items visit Ms Bob's On-Line Book Shoppe & Ephemera Emporium on the Transgender Forum Shopping Mall. She can be contacted c/o LadyLike or at <msbob@tgforum.com>.

CAROL KLEINMAIER is a founding member of Transgendered Nation. For over a decade she has been an activist for both gender and AIDS issues.

North American Support Groups

National US Membership Organizations

International Foundation for Gender Education, PO Box 540229, Waltham, MA 02454. Publishes Transgender Tapestry ($40/year subscription). Reprints and books on TV/TS subjects, other info. Hosts annual conference in different locations around the country. Phone: 617-899-2212. <ifge@ifge.org><www.ifge.org>

Renaissance Transgender Association, Inc , 987 Old Eagle School Rd., Suite 719, Wayne, Pa. 19087. 610-975-9119 24 hr. answering machine, but phones are answered personally on Monday and Thursday evenings. Membership fee of $40 includes the monthly publication "Transgender Community News." Also publishes Background Papers and Community Outreach Bulletins on transgender issues for personal and professional use. Speakers available for classroom, corporate, or media discussions of transgender issues. Renaissance currently has four chapters and seven affiliates. Affiliates are noted with "(!)" in the list below. Renaissance is a 501[c][3] non-profit membership organization. <angela@ren.org> <www.ren.org>

Society for the Second Self (SSS), Box 194, Tulare, CA 93275. Focused on families and relationships. Tri-Ess publishes the Femme Mirror quarterly and hosts an annual convention. Tri-Ess chapters are marked with "#" in the list below. Tri-Ess is a non-profit membership organization. <jeftris@aol.com>

AK

Alaska T People, c/o Bobbie Wendy Tucey, PO Box 670349, Chugiak, AK, 99567

AL

Madison County Gender Center, c/o Metropolitan Community Church, 3015 Sparkman Drive NW, Huntsville, AL, 35810

AZ

A Rose, PO Box 8108, Glendale, AZ, 85312-8108

Alpha-Zeta (Tri-Ess), PO Box 1738, Tempe, AZ, 85280-1738

Evolere Transgendered Foundation, 1830 E. Broadway Blvd. #124-269, Tucson, AZ, 85719

Tau Upsilon, 8802 E. Broadway Blvd. #145, Tucson, AZ, 85710

CA

3rd Sect, c/o Sacto. Gender Assoc., PO Box 215456, Sacramento, CA, 95821-1456

Access Point, PO Box 7180, Los Osos, CA, 93402

Alpha Chapter, 409 N. Pacific Coast Hwy. #320, Redondo Beach, CA, 90277

American Transsexual Education Center, 1626 n. Wilcox Ave. #584, Hollywood, CA, 90028

Androgyny, PO Box 480740, (Santa Monica) Los Angeles, CA, 90048

Bom Free, PO Box 52829, Riverside, CA, 92517

CD Social Group, PO Box 224, Montrose, CA, 91021

Center for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgendered Community, 3909 Centre Street, San Diego, CA, 92103

CHIC, PO Box 8487, Long Beach, CA, 90808

Diablo Valley Girls, PO Box 272885, Concord, CA, 94527-2885

Emergence-Support for Christian TS, 208 W. Manning, Reedley, CA, 93654

FPSG, #634 PO Box 410-990, San Francisco, CA, 94141-0990

Gender Awareness League, c/o Grace Bredow, PO Box 46062 , Los Angeles, CA, 90046

Gender Expressions, PO Box 816, Lakewood, CA, 90714-0816

L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center/ The Village, 1125 N. McCadden Pl., Los Angeles, CA, 90038

Ladies Knight Out, PO Box 19608-179, Irvine, CA, 92713

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Omega Chi, PO Box 1088, Yorba Linda, CA, 92686

Powder Puffs of California, PO Box 1088, Yorba Linda, CA, 92886

PSGV Transgendered Support, 401 South Main St., Suite 104 , Pomona, CA, 91765

Rainbow Gender Association, PO Box 700730, San Jose, CA, 95170-0730

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San Francisco Gender Information (SFGI), PO Box 423602, San Francisco, CA, 94142-3602

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Silicon Valley Gender Association, 175 Stockton, San Jose, CA,

Society for Initiatives & Services in TG Issues, PO Box 30844, Oakland, CA, 94604-0844

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Thursday Irregulars, c/o Joan Sheldon, PO Box 6541, San Jose, CA, 95150-6541

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Transsexual Support Group, The Center Long Beach, 2017 East 4th St., Long Beach, CA, 90814

Tri Chi Tri-Ess, PO Box 194, Tulare, CA, 93275

U.S. G.I.R.L.S. Club, P.O. Box 3182, Cerritos, CA, 90703-3182

Ventura Transgender Outreach, c/o GLCC, 3503 Arundell Circle, Suite 3-A, Ventura, CA, 93003

Nadia Cabezas c/o Jeff Faircloth, 191 Golden Ave, San francisco, CA , 94102

CO

Delta, Tri-Ess, PO Box 16208, Denver, CO, 80216-6208

Gender Identity Center of Colorado, Inc., 1455 Ammons St., Suite 100, Lakewood, CO, 80215-4993

Phoenix Project, 1740 South Buckley Road, #6-178, Aurora, CO, 80017

Pueblo TV/TS Support Group, 1144 Clarmont, Pueblo, CO, 81004-2808

Teenage Kids of TSs, c/o Laurie Ciccotello, 1740 S. Buckley Road #6-178, Aurora, CO, 80017

CT

Connecticut Outreach Society, PO Box 163, Farmington, CT, 6034

connecticuTView, PO Box 2281, Devon, CT, 6460

GBSING, c/o PO Box 162, Haddam, CT, 6438

Twenty (XX) Club Inc., PO Box 387, Hartford, CT, 06141-0387

D.C.

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DE

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FL

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Trans Alliance of Gainesville, PO Box 143102, Gainesville, FL, 32614-3102

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HI

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Iowa Artistry, PO Box 75, Cedar Rapids, IA, 52406

QCAD Group, PO Box 1534, Davenport, IA, 52809

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IL

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BGB (a.k.a. BlueGrass Belles), PO Box 20173, Louisville, Ky, 40250

LA

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MD

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MO
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Gender Identity Project at the Lesbian & Gay Community Services Center, One Little West 12th Street, New York, NY, 10014

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LIFE, PO Box 1311, Watermill, NY, 11976-1311

Metropolitan Gender Network, 561 Hudson St., Box 45, New York, NY, 10014

Rochester Transgender organization, C/O Gay Alliance of the Genesee Valley; 179 Atlantic Avenue, Rochester, NY, 14607

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Transgender Network, PO Box 753, New Paltz, NY, 12561

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It's Time Ohio!, PO Box 21310, Columbus, OH, 43221

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Renaissance, Greater Philadelphia, 987 Old Eagle School Road, Suite 719, Wayne, PA, 19087

Renaissance, Lower Susquehanna Valley, PO Box 2122, Harrisburg, PA, 17105-2122

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TSG (Transsexual Support Group), 6020 Penn Circle South, Pittsburgh, PA, 15206

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Memphis TransGender Alliance, PO Box 11052, Memphis, TN, 38111-1052

Tennessee Vals, PO Box 92335, Nashville, TN, 37209

TX
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Austin Second Image, PO Box 679, Leander, TX, 78641

Central Texas Transgender Society, PO Box 300487, Austin, TX, 78705

Epsilon Tau, Tri-Ess, PO Box 945, New Waverly, TX, 77358

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Nu Epsilon Tau, PO Box 14096, Pantego, TX, 76094

Spouses & Partners International Conference for Education (SPICE), Peggy Rudd, c/o 8880 Bellaire B2 #104, Houston, TX, 77036

Tau Chi, Tri-Ess, 8800 Bellaire B2, Ste. 104, Houston, TX

Texas Assoc. of Transsexuals (T.A.T.S.), PO Box 142, Bellaire, TX, 77401

UT
An Engendered Species, PO box 11897, Salt Lake City, UT, 84147

Western Transsexuals Support Network, 4667 Holladay Blvd, #2, Salt Lake City, UT, 84117

VA
Chi Epsilon Sigma tri-Ess, c/o PO Box 382, Norge, VA, 2317-0382

Trans-Gender Education Association, PO Box 16036, Arlington, VA, 22215

VT
TRANS, PO Box 5687, Burlington, VT, 5402

WA
Bellingham Gender Group, PO Box 2004, Bellingham, WA, 98227

Emerald City, PO Box 31318, Seattle, WA, 98103

Ingersoll Gender Center, 1812 E. Madison, Suite 106, Seattle, WA, 98122-2843

WI
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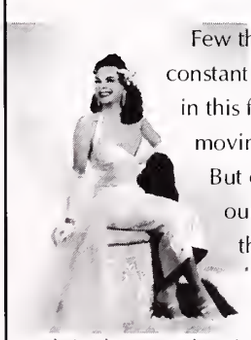
Madison Transgender Group, 14W Mifflin St, Madison, WI, 53704

WV
Trans-West Virginia, PO Box 2322, Huntington, WV, 25724

The Queen is Dead! Long Live the Queen!



Few things are constant or stable in this fast moving world. But during our lifetime there's been one truth in the crossdressing community. One institution whose focus has remained constant since the first time you put on a pair of pantyhose; that was steadfast as the North Star even before the invention of pantyhose. That unchanging rock in the firmament was Finocchio's, a nightclub "where the most beautiful women on stage are men." Finocchio's was in San Francisco "at the same location since 1936." But on November 27, 1999, after 63 years, Finocchio's chiseled off her make-up, hung up her tits, and went dark. San Francisco Poet Laureate Lawrence Ferlinghetti said it best, "What a drag."

The queen is dead! So, long live the queen! But who is she? Who inherits Finocchio's mantle of baubles, bangles and bugle beads? Which venue has the distinction of being the oldest showroom in America dedicated to professional female impersonation? Have you been there? Is it in your hometown?

LadyLike and Transgender Forum are beginning a search. We want to discover who's been carrying the torch the longest. Which are the **three oldest clubs** featuring drag acts at least three nights a week, ten months a year. Is there a club in Atlanta? Maybe there's an older one in Seattle? Not a bar with an occasional show, this has to be a nightclub with tulle as its foundation.

Send us letters. Send us tips. We'll follow every lead you provide and sometime next year LadyLike and Transgender Forum will run a series of articles, one on each of these venerable institutions. Join the search for community history! Send your nominations of old clubs to the old queens at LadyLike:

LadyLike/CDS
P.O. Box 61263
King of Prussia, PA 19406.

Lake Erie Gala '99

By Melina Stevens

I checked my makeup in the mirror for what seemed like the hundreth time and looked yet again at the skirt, top, and heels I was wearing. All right, Melina, the outfit looks fine. You've done this how many times? You are ready, girl. Just go!

So, there I stood in my room at the Holiday Inn in Erie, Pennsylvania. All dressed up with some place to go, but I wasn't going anywhere. At least, not yet. I was nervous. I've visited nightclubs in South Florida for years, but here I was, fretting before the start of the Lake Erie Gala '99, an annual crossdressing event in northwestern Pennsylvania.

Why was I anxious? No one in Erie knew me. Then again, it was an unfamiliar city and this was my first out-of-town crossdressing event. Who knew what to expect? What if the other girls don't like me? What if I can't find them?

I've stood behind closed doors before, afraid to step outside (sometimes I didn't). But after flying 1,300 miles from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, to Erie, Pennsylvania, I wasn't spending the weekend sitting in my hotel room afraid of my own beard shadow.

It was the first night of the Gala. Everyone was meeting at The Zone, a TG-Friendly club across the street. I pulled back the curtains, peeked outside and saw another crossdresser. I felt so much better. At least, I was in the right place.

Time to go.

I opened the door and stepped into the cold November air. I was apprehensive and exhilarated. I was about to open a new chapter in my life, but I wasn't sure how it would unfold or end. I was still a tad nervous, but had no thoughts of turning back.

I crossed the street and walked into The Zone. Just off the dance floor several Erie Sisters were sitting at two tables. Another wave of relief. I introduced myself to Lisa, Marsha, Amber, Roberta, and the other gals. Most were typical crossdressers: straight, married or single, and all working otherwise normal jobs, quite unlike our public persona.

The next two days were fabulous! We ate lunch at a small restaurant before a wine tasting tour at Penn Shore Vineyards and shopping at a consignment shop. There was dinner and dancing at the hotel Friday night, followed by visits to local clubs.

I attended a humor seminar Saturday afternoon before heading out with Laura to a nail salon, where I got my first set of acrylic nails. I was in heaven. That night, I attended the banquet, which was followed by a comedy act in the hotel lounge and more dancing.

I didn't want Saturday to end.

The next morning several of us met for brunch and reminisced about the great weekend and next year's Gala, which is next month (see ad page 12). A bit of advice, girls: Should you attend, don't spend too much time worrying about the right time to leave your hotel room. The real fun starts when you step out the door.

(Photos from the 1999 event are on the next two pages.)

Melina Stevens (l) & Amber Nicole Richards.

Amber Nicole Richards, Erie Sisters' Vice President ▲

Amber from Pittsburgh ▼

Carol ▲

Lake Erie Gala

Marsha, Erie Sisters' President ▼

Kim ▶

Melina (r) & Amber from Pittsburgh ▲

Lake Erie Gala

▲ Hamming it up at the hotel on Friday evening.

◀ Lisa Kelly, Erie Sisters' Activities Director

It was Comedy Night ▶ on Saturday Night.

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LadyLike is the publication that treats the subjects of transvestism and crossdressing as they should be treated, with respect and sophistication. Chock full of great features and loads of photos, you won't want to miss a single issue. Every issue contains important and useful information to help you realize the "ladylike" qualities within yourself.

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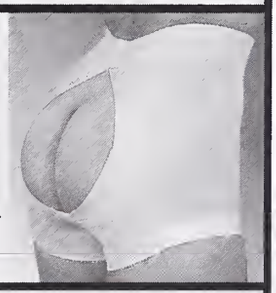

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On My Mind...

One of our subscribers has asked me to mention a program that is near and dear to her heart. She has a child in need of a liver transplant and, of course, finding a donor is a difficult task. She asks that everyone consider signing up for your local organ donor program. People die every day. All too often, in their grief, the family of the deceased does not realize they may save someone else's life through organ donation. In many states, it is simply a matter of signing a form when you get your license. Please give it serious consideration.

Speaking of consideration, I've received several letters from readers who have written letters to people having their address in the magazine, or having a forwarding number and not getting any response. Come on, ladies! This is downright rude. As long as the writer is not insulting or obscene, you owe them a reply, even if the reply is, "Thanks, but I'm not interested." If the complaints keep up, I will start asking for names and we'll drop those people who do not show simple courtesy.

Cindy Leonhart (FWD 795) is looking for a pristine copy of LL#38 (Foxy Roxy). If anyone has a copy they arer willing to part with, please write Cindy care of the magazine. I don't intend to make a habit of placing such announcements in this space, so please don't start sending me requests.

Last time I wrote about the Transgender Fund in this space. Well, the response has been unbelievable. In just under six weeks we raised almost $13,000. Now that sounds like a lot of money, but it's only a drop in the bucket when compared to what's needed.

For example, there's the Christie Littleton Legal Support Initiative. Christie Littleton is a post-op transsexual woman who was married for many years. Her husband had to be hospitalized and died as a result of medical malpractice. Ms. Littleton sued for wrongful death.

The insurance company for the hospital claimed that Ms. Littleton had no standing to sue because her marriage was invalid on the basis of her being a MtF transsexual, even though the state of Texas had issued Christie a new birth certificate with "F" for her sex.

So, Christie sued the insurance company. A Texas lower court ruled against her and reasserted the claim her marriage was invalid because Ms. Littleton is still a male and homosexual marriages are prohibited in Texas.

At this point, Ms. Littleton's attorney throws up his hands and walks away. However, transgender attorneys Phyllis Frye and Alyson Meiselman were not about to let it stop there. They have taken Christie's case to the U.S. Supreme Court. And a good thing, too, because a similar case has surfaced in Missouri.

Legal support is costly, especially when one must appear before the U.S. Supreme Court. That's why we need your donations and contributions. So, please consider giving some amount, any amount, to insure our community's future.

My last comments have to do with something I had hoped I would not have to mention. I've received lots of feedback from readers informing me of negative comments made about this and other transgender magazines by the publisher of a new tg magazine on the scene. I am well aware of those comments and have chosen to ignore them... until now. I figure how many subscribers can she snag if she continues to make fun of most of the community? It's just not very smart to insult your market base. The magazine's entire tone is "I'm better than you are," and that's not going to last long in this community. If you have to tell people how cool you are, you aren't.

I've said it over and over, yet it bears repeating. *Lady-Like* does not compete with other tg magazines; they compete with us. We publish what we believe our readers want to see and read based on the feedback we get from them directly. If we please them, we grow. If not, we stagnate or die. We must be doing something right because we just registered customer number 4000.

Stay frosty!

JoAnn Roberts

The Transgender Fund:

A Message From The Chair

We are gratified with the support we have received from so many caring and thoughtful individuals to date. We knew from the start that, deep down, most of you recognize the role money plays in breaking down the oppressive wall of ignorance we face every day. The noblest cause driven by the most passionate and ableest advocate will fall far short of its intended goals if the finances are not there to move it through the "system." Unfortunately, this is reality. Fortunately, we have an answer: The Transgender Fund.

Donations have ranged from one dollar to the hundreds of dollars. We genuinely appreciate every contribution, no matter the size. Of all that came in over the past months, two in particular stand out in my mind.

The first was a check from a transgender community group in the South. With their check came a pledge to send that same amount every month. I have no way of knowing at this point whether the money came out of their general operating funds, or was the result of someone taking up a collection at their monthly meeting. Nevertheless, I thought how wonderful it would be if every community group passed the hat each month. If every member could give just a dollar or two, can you imagine what that would mean for the good works we want to support?

The second contribution was the most poignant. We received a check for $20 from a person incarcerated in a Connecticut prison. In part, they wrote, "I am very pleased to donate, and would like to continue to help as much as I can. Have a nice day!" Wow, can you believe that? Here is a person with nothing; a person who literally earns pennies a day, if that. And, a person who has the heart to want to help others... you, me, and all our brothers and sisters. I cannot remember being so touched!

At our website and in our brochure, you will see the array of programs, the Select Initiatives, that The Transgender Fund currently endorses. Through this unique approach, the Fund gives you the option to choose how your contribution is invested in the development of our Community. Everything you give, 100%, is allocated to that Initiative. We deduct no administrative fees, not a penny.

The core of our Foundation is the General Fund. Contributions to the General Fund enable us to keep on going, and here we are beginning to build the critical mass of capital necessary to serve our Community in perpetuity. So, when you direct money to one of today's Select Initiatives, please set aside a little extra for all of our tomorrow's as well.

Whether you are a Crossdresser, Transsexual, Intersexed, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, or simply a person who cares about those whose lives have been compromised because of who they are as human beings, The Transgender Fund is with you.

Make a difference! Make a donation. Today!

Thank you so very much.
Diane Dale
The Transgender Fund

The Transgender Fund is a national, independent, 501[c][3] charitable foundation dedicated to advancing the interests of the Transgender Community. Contributions to the fund are tax deductible to the extent allowable by federal law. Please help with any amount you can afford.

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